



National Climate Assessment: Resource for Climate Literacy and Decision Making

1:30–4:30 PM, Sunday, Feb 15, 2015

AAAS 2015

The [session](#) was moderated by Emily Cloyd (USGCRP National Coordination Office) and began with talks by a panel of four presenters affiliated with the National Climate Assessment (NCA), including:

- Susanne C. Moser (Susanne Moser Research and Consulting): [Building and Sustaining Assessment Capacity Across Scales](#)
- Melissa A. Kenney (University of Maryland): [Supporting and Informing Decisions Through Assessment and Indicators](#)
- Richard Moss (Joint Global Change Research Institute): [Creating Decision-Relevant Assessments](#)
- Minda Berbeco (National Center for Science Education): [Building Climate Literacy Through Educational Partnerships](#)

The talks were followed by questions for the panel by the audience. Subsequently, the audience (~ 20 people) and presenters gathered together for an informal discussion about the process and products of the [Third National Climate Assessment \(NCA3\)](#). Audience participants were asked to talk about how they've interacted with the NCA3 (process, report, related products, follow-on activities), what they found useful and effective, and what they found to be missing or an area for improvement. A summary of the discussion follows.

What participants felt worked well about the NCA3 process/products:

- Regional-scale information, easy-to-understand graphics, and the interactive website were instrumental in making the report meaningful and digestible for students and local-level decision makers.
- The report provides an authoritative framing of climate impacts at the national and regional scales, thereby serving as a jumping-off point for assessments and responses at the state and local scales.
- [NCAnet](#) was critical in engaging and spreading the word to many different groups, particularly at earlier stages in the assessment process (e.g., during public comment period on draft report).
- The [NCAnet Toolkit](#) and media training for authors were important resources for spreading the NCA messages effectively.
- Accompanying human-interest stories (e.g., [Dan Glick/The Story Group videos](#)) were helpful in going “beyond data” to deliver the NCA messages in a meaningful way.

What participants felt was lacking in the NCA3 process/products, and their ideas for improving future assessments:

- Participants would have liked the report to provide information at finer scales than the regions used, capturing state- and local-level impacts.
 - [State-level factsheets](#) are available from the White House, but participants were interested in something more directly integrated with the report (e.g., such that a user could click on their own state from the NCA website).
 - The community-level stories and case studies used in the report chapters were viewed positively, but participants would like these to be expanded to cover more locations in future reports. Participants felt that being able to point to impacts for a specific locality would be (even) more meaningful for students' understanding and for local-level decision making.
- A desire was expressed for an NCA process that more closely involves the education community, so as to optimize the final product(s) for students of all ages and especially young people who will soon be voting and entering the job market.



- It would be useful, through accompanying resources if not through the report itself, to connect climate impacts and responses to potential career paths for students, as a way of engaging them in STEM fields and in solutions to the challenges of climate change.
- A clear and more immediately obvious discussion of uncertainty would be desirable in future reports, particularly with respect to decision making. In plain English, the word “uncertainty” suggests that findings are not actionable, so using a term like “confidence level” may be helpful.
- Participants encouraged a more direct integration of human-interest stories with the report itself, and suggested capitalizing on the story-telling potential of recent events like the Boston snowstorms.
- Participants urged the NCA program to continue (and do more) to engage with and listen to the needs of information users. In particular, participants recommended focusing on intermediary groups (e.g., League of Women Voters) that can translate the report for local-level decision makers (e.g., city council members). In addition, better promotion of the opportunities for public input—beyond commenting on the full draft (which may be overwhelming for some)—was encouraged.